

# LAFF

THE LAFF SOCIETY For the men and women engaged in Life After The Ford Foundation

February 2010 / No. 62

## The LAFF Reunion

# FORD AND ITS ALUMNI: RESTORING A 'CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP'

It was, noted Shepard Forman, new president of the LAFF Society, “a magnificent day,” a gathering of “an extraordinary group of talented people.”

It was also, he observed, an occasion of deep feelings. When he was at the Foundation, he said, there was “a kind of austerity of emotion. Emotion did not figure in the way we interacted in the work that we did.



Good feelings were in abundance as the alumni gathered at the Ford Foundation for their reunion.

But when I saw the reaction of the people as they walked into the building there really is a great deal of emotion in this room.”

He was speaking to the more than 150 alumni of Ford and their spouses and guests who had come to the reunion last November, held at the Foundation in a gesture of conciliation noted by several who attended,

as well as by Luis Ubiñas, president of the Foundation.

In remarks to the alumni during an opening ceremony in the auditorium, Ubiñas noted his relationship with LAFF’s outgoing president, **Peter Geithner**, as “one of my trusted advisers.”

“He’s helped me,” Ubiñas said, “restore a cordial relationship between Ford and LAFF, which was something that was important to me. We need to have an alumni association that is with us and part of us.”

This sense of a common bond was emphasized by Forman. “We’re all here because we have very strong feelings for the institution, in many and most cases for each other,” and, he said, “because we all continue to share the values the Foundation continues to stand for and which we all stand for...”

“It’s an exciting moment in LAFF’s life: a larger and much more active membership, as demonstrated by today’s turnout, an evolving relationship with the Foundation...that the membership is going to have to play a very important part in helping to determine.”

He noted, too, that there now are “new opportunities for communications amongst us through a linked and guided *continued on page 2*

## Ford and its Alumni

*continued from page 1*

trilogy of website, newsletter and blogs. We'll be exploring these in the months to come."

**Basil Whiting**, who had worked at the Foundation in the National Affairs and Social Development program, later reacted to the expressions of cooperation by noting that "time...cures many things," and "an era of unhappy strain is over....Now, can we make the relationship something productive, or will it suffice to have occasional and happy and stimulating reunions?"

**Peter de Janosi**, a former Foundation official in programs in Economic Development, Higher Education, and Resources and the Environment, referred to the "new happy realities." He said he "felt gratitude to the Foundation's new president that he decided the alumni are a potential asset to the organization, and that he thought it

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## WANTED: CONTRIBUTIONS

This newsletter needs a continuous flow of contributions—news, recollections, comments or anything else you think will be of interest to other LAFFers. With the more capacious LAFF Blog now competing for copy, we're particularly interested in items of one to three pages and without any urgency in timing. Please send copy for the next issue to John LaHoud at [jlahoud25@hotmail.com](mailto:jlahoud25@hotmail.com).

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wise to make peace with those who were so insensitively...treated by his predecessors."

In one of the more emotional moments of the day, and in linking the Foundation's past to its present work, Ubiñas, before speaking to the alumni, called to the stage Ruth Friendly and Mary Bundy, widows of **Fred Friendly** and **McGeorge Bundy**, who had been a president of the Foundation.

"There are so many people responsible for the...greatness of this institution," he said, and noted that their "husbands played such a central part in the history of this Foundation. I know personally the sacrifices these two women and several others in the audience made to support their spouses, and I just want to take a moment to acknowledge that sacrifice and to praise that sacrifice."

In discussing the Foundation's status now, Ubiñas said he is "ecstatic about where we're heading. I'm amazed at the level of progress we've made in a short period of time. I'm proud of the legacy you've all left us and I hope that we can leave this institution a decade from now, two decades from now, a stronger and more powerful institution than it is today."

Part of his pride is because "we've moved over \$40 million from internal spending to external grantmaking....Those of you who run organizations...know how hard it is this year, how much harder it will be next year.

So for us to be able to move \$40 million into the community is a powerful thing.... Who would think that in this time of true economic strife our core program budget, the money given to grantees, would be up, not down, this year versus the rich year of 2007."

As an example of the Foundation's work, he cited a "special initiative" of \$100 million "helping bring core innovations and lessons learned from the charter schools movement, from innovative public schools systems, even independent schools, into the mainstream.

"We didn't know that you can take a poor kid performing poorly and turn him or her into a poor kid performing exceptionally well. We didn't know that was possible....the challenge is getting that into the mainstream. Unless the mainstream changes, the typical low-income kid will remain in a destitute school not serving them well."

For the rest of the afternoon people broke into five groups for panel discussions on key aspects of the Foundation's work: education and scholarship, sexuality and reproductive health, natural assets and climate change, human rights, and a new logo and tagline for the Foundation. (Reports on these sessions are printed elsewhere in this newsletter.)

The day ended with a reception in the building's dining room area, during which **Peter Geithner** received a global clock as a gift from the society's members. ■

## 'We Need Alumni'

*The following are excerpts from remarks by Luis Ubiñas, president of the Ford Foundation, in welcoming LAFF to its reunion.*

"Peter (Geithner, outgoing LAFF president)... has been one of my trusted advisers.... He's helped me restore a cordial relationship between Ford and LAFF, which was something that was important to me. We need to have an alumni association that is with us and part of us, where we encourage people to join....

"The Foundation is strong now. We have a powerful program strategy, made up of thirty-four initiatives, which operate in large-scale, often tens of millions of dollars, and many people working on them, together as teams and not as individuals, all over the world....

"We've moved over \$40 million from internal spending to external grantmaking. This is

a moment of crisis for many of our grantees. Those of you who run organizations...know how hard it is this year, how much harder it will be next year. So for us to be able to move \$40 million into the community is a powerful thing....These changes, and prudent management of the endowment, have given us the capacity to fund aggressively during this downturn. Who would think that in this time of true economic strife our core budget, the money given to grantees, would be up, not down, this year versus the rich year of 2007....

"I'm ecstatic about where we're heading. I'm amazed at the level of progress we've made in a short period of time. I'm proud of the legacy you've all left us and I hope that we can leave this institution a decade from now, two decades from now, a stronger and more powerful institution than it is today."

# Moving Forward

I take great pride and considerable pleasure in assuming the presidency of the LAFF Society. LAFF is a special organization, founded with the singular purpose of keeping former colleagues in touch with each other and with events and occurrences associated with the Foundation. What binds us in membership is an admiration for each other as individuals and professionals, and a shared set of values with an institution that has been an important part of our lives.

My “investiture” was part of a magnificent day at the Foundation that is captured and retold in this issue of the Newsletter, and I have little need to repeat the content of the afternoon’s panels and general discussion, which is reported elsewhere in these pages. Rather, I will call attention to a few important corollaries to the main event.

First, the meeting—graciously hosted by President Luis Ubiñas at the Foundation’s headquarters on 43rd Street—signaled a new relationship between Ford and LAFF.

Second, the reunion attracted more than 150 former staffers, spouses and guests. A brief tour through the audience in the auditorium enabled many LAFF members to introduce themselves and the work they did at the Foundation, demonstrating once again the extraordinary talent that has passed through that building over the years. The reception at the end of the day was a lively reminder that we are privileged to have a membership that likes, admires and yearns to interact with each other.

It also became evident that LAFF is in a new place now, with nearly 500 members, eight regional chapters, one active “affinity group” that brings former and current Ford staff together around their mutual interest in reproductive health and rights, and several active channels of communication. Like any evolving and growing institution, LAFF now needs some rethinking so that it is positioned to best serve its membership, which is, after all, the *raison d’être* of its existence.

With that in mind, I have asked our colleagues **Sheila Gordon** and **Thea Lurie** to each chair a task force to make recommendations on matters of governance and membership and of communications, respectively.



Shep Forman, the Society's new president.

The first will examine current governance structures and term limits for officers, including the President, Vice President and Advisory Council, as well as membership dues and services, all in the spirit of a voluntary and minimally bureaucratized institution. The second will focus on the current communications “trilogy”—the Newsletter, the website and the blog—and make recommendations on how to modernize, streamline and make more effective LAFF’s modes of internal and external communications. In both cases, the membership will be consulted during the process to make certain the task forces are fully informed by members’ preferences.

Other matters will be taken up by the officers this Spring, including the promising and evolving relationship with the Foundation, possible additional chapters and affinity groups, and, importantly, the persistent and, in my view, too polemical a question of the society’s name. The LAFF Society, with its mix of irony and nostalgia, evokes strong feelings, particularly among some of its founding members and some of the Foundation’s past and current leadership. For some, the name embodies what the Society stands for; for others, particularly newer members, it’s a matter of “what’s in a name?”

For me, *Life After the Ford Foundation* is less meaningful than my *Lifetime Association with the Ford Foundation*. I was privileged to have a Ford-subsidized fellowship in graduate school as well as a post-doc. I subsequently worked for 18 wonderful years at the Foundation, and the Foundation was a steady and generous source of support to the Center on International Cooperation, which I founded at New York University upon leaving the Foundation. As I joked in my brief talk at the reunion, now, as I assume the presidency of LAFF, the only thing remaining to me is burial in the atrium. Life “after” the Ford Foundation doesn’t quite sum it up!

I would be terribly remiss if I did not use this opportunity to thank once again my predecessors in the LAFF presidency, in particular **Peter Geithner**, who did an extraordinary job in hus-

banding the Society during the exceptional period of growth and change; the members of the Advisory Council, who have given LAFF the benefit of their counsel; the Newsletter editors, who have worked tirelessly to keep us well and interestingly informed; Peter Ford, who, despite his name, has no connection with the Foundation or LAFF but provides pro bono website management; **Dorothy Nixon**, for taking care of our mailings, and **Nellie Toma**, our fabulous Secretary-Treasurer, who keeps us all going. Finally, a special thanks to **Barry Gaberman**, who has agreed to stay on as LAFF’s Vice President.

When all is said and done, though, LAFF is a membership organization, and the membership is its fundamental strength. I urge each of you to reach out to colleagues who are not yet members and encourage them to join. And I ask each of you to please give us your feedback. LAFF is yours and it is incumbent on each of us to make it the best that it can be.

I wish each of you a year of good health, much happiness, success in your work and progress in the hard work of peace, justice and equitable development, the core of our work at the Foundation and the basis for our hanging in there together.

With warm regards, **Shep Forman**.



Shep Forman greets the alumni as they mingle in the auditorium before the afternoon's meetings get under way.



# A Flow of Memories and Emotions

## Alumni React to the Reunion

**T**IME, SOMEONE SAID to me when I expressed my gratitude for Ford welcoming LAFF into its bosom, cures many things.

So, an era of unhappy strain is over. The event was wonderful, the break-outs stimulating, the schmoozing and catching up, both. Now, can we make the relationship something productive, or will it suffice to have occasional happy and stimulating reunions? Since our new Ford president comes from McKinsey & Company, which values having an active alumni group, perhaps he has ideas how we alumni can

help in the Ford mission.

***Basil Whiting** worked in National Affairs and Social Development, and is now a consultant.*

I THINK SHEP (Shepard Forman, new LAFF president) captured so much when he commented on the atmosphere of warmth and excitement in the room. I certainly felt it. I also was reminded of the outstanding qualities of the many people who have served the Foundation over the decades in all capacities—in New York, in field offices, as program staff, support staff, administra-

tors, management. It has been one of the greatest professional experiences of my life to work with Foundation colleagues, who remain some of the most thoughtful, deeply experienced and humane folks one could hope to encounter, here or anywhere.

***Mary Zurbuchen** is Director of Asia and Russia programs at the Foundation's International Fellowship Program.*

IT'S ALL ABOUT VALUES—shared values and sharing values.

Most of us who joined the Ford Foundation believed and still believe we can make a



Peter Geithner, the outgoing president, accepted his gift of a global clock from the membership during the reception as Nellie Toma, the Society's secretary-treasurer, looks on. Alumni are caught by the camera as they enter the building, including, bottom right, Shep Forman and his wife, Leona.

positive difference in a troubled world by supporting, as Luis Ubiñas states in his 2009 message in the Foundation's annual report, "visionary people on the frontlines of change around the world...to bring about social justice."

During our time as staff at the Foundation, we hope we contribute to grantee success and expand our knowledge of and sensitivity to issues in our fields of expertise. So, why cut off contact between the Foundation—its current staff and institution—and those of us who leave and continue to grow our experience and expertise with institutions with shared values?

A personal story: I arrived at the Ford Foundation as a very young but very well-trained lawyer (Yale Law and Cravath, Swaine & Moore) to help grapple with the impact of the newly enacted Tax Reform Act of 1969. I knew there must be a way I could put my training and values to use in enhanc-

ing opportunities for social justice, and my decade at the Foundation opened a path, first, through practicing law as normally conceived and, second, from 1976 to 1979, by arguing for and then building a human rights program inside South Africa that remained a foundation of its program work decades after I left the Foundation to become general counsel of the United States government's foreign assistance agency.

Since then I have worked both as a lawyer and, then, as a senior executive with major institutions, sharing and deepening these values. Now retired, I continue advising and doing board work for large international NGOs, wrestling with issues of democratic values and enabling civil society institutions.

The November LAFF event, enabled especially by Luis Ubiñas and Peter Geithner, recognized and applauded our shared values, and that experience informs judgment. The panels were a superb way of sharing experi-

ence and the reception a wonderful networking opportunity that was just plain fun.

**Sheila McLean** is a strategy consultant.

IT WAS SUCH A JOY to come together with old and new friends. I just wish we'd had a whole weekend to do it. I was flooded with feelings throughout every moment of the gathering, and very grateful to have had the opportunity to revisit such a wonderful chapter of my life that continues to influence my thinking in all sorts of ways.

Since imitation is the highest form of flattery, other Program Associate attendees and I are playing with the idea of putting together a PA powwow to unite PAs from across the years and from around the world, and President Ubiñas graciously offered to enable us to use the Foundation to host it.

**Sanda Balaban** is a network leader in the New York City Department of Education Empowerment Schools.

## A Flow of Memories

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The Ford Foundation president, Luis Ubiñas, at right in the bottom picture, stopped to chat with individual alumni during the afternoon, including, in the top left picture, Sheila Gordon of the Society's advisory board and, to her right, Nellie Toma, its secretary-treasurer.

THE SESSION ON Human Rights inspired a renewed sense of pride around the table in our having been associated with the Ford Foundation, in my case for almost 18 years, as my first "serious" job.

I would like to add one comment to what Natalia Kamen, president of ELMA Philanthropies, eloquently stated about the importance of children's rights, especially in the African context. It is indeed totally unacceptable that the United States is the only nation in the world not to have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Of course, it is one thing to ratify that convention, or any UN convention, and quite another thing to implement its far-reaching provisions.

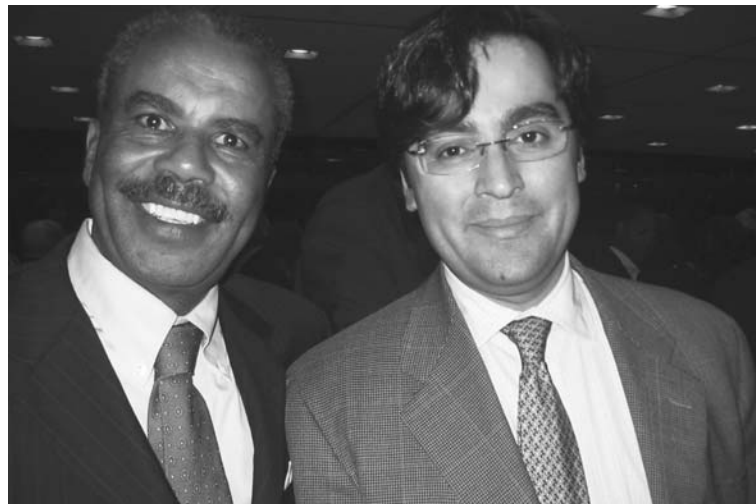
For the Ford Foundation, as well as for UNICEF, where I worked for an equal number of years after leaving Ford, the field of children's rights, as well as women's rights, represents an awesomely challenging array of complex issues in the realm of economic and social rights, which, again, the United States has failed to recognize in the context of international human rights law.

Neither the Foundation nor UNICEF, with such limited resources in comparison with the magnitude of those challenges, can hope to make much of a lasting contribution in fields as vast as children's and women's rights around the globe. While recognizing the importance of the plea of **Larry Cox**, executive director of Amnesty International USA, for acceptance of the universality and indivisibility of human rights, no one organization can hope to have a sustained positive impact across the

whole array of economic and social rights, especially of the world's most vulnerable groups, including children. Tough choices must be made in allocating those scarce resources, human as well as financial.

Sara Rios, the Foundation's Director of Human Rights, in her excellent presentation, briefly mentioned the right to education as one priority in the Foundation's approach to human rights. I would have liked to have heard more about how that objective is being pursued, especially in Africa and other "least developed" country contexts where even access to the most basic education, including functional literacy and numeracy, is so often denied a majority of the women and children.

I was also moved by **Robert Goldman's** plea for a place on the Foundation's agenda for the formidable issue of ethnic conflict.



Education is surely not a panacea for combating intolerance, hatred and violence among ethnic groups but it is a necessary step in confronting that horrible cancer in the social fabric of so many societies in our world today. The earlier in their lives the benefits of quality education can reach the world's children, the greater the chances that our conflict-prone world can eventually address that range of issues relating to intolerance, as well as so many others standing in the way of the fulfillment of basic human rights around the globe.

**James Himes** worked in the Latin American and Caribbean program, and in the Office of the Vice President.

FROM THE MOMENT that Catharine and I arrived (to have **Frank Sutton** hold the door for us as we entered), it was a



Richard Magat, co-founder of the LAFF Society, poses with outgoing president Peter Geithner, while Buzz Tenney and David and Sherry Arnold take time to reminisce.

## “Visiting the building brought back myriad memories. Fred loved that place.”

*Ruth Friendly, widow of Fred Friendly*

delightful event. We were especially touched to find our Islamabad colleague from the 1970s, **Salim Sufi**, waiting to greet us, for we owe much to him.

Quite apart from his integrity and loyal service to the Foundation, Catharine never could forget Salim’s assistance to her during a troubled time while she was alone and had been seriously traumatized by threats of “imminent immolation” from a rioting crowd of young men carrying open cans of petrol as they raced to burn the American Embassy.

Nor will I soon forget an occasion when I collapsed at the Rawalpindi airport enroute to Lahore only to have Salim rush to my aid and carry me back to Islamabad for medical attention and badly needed rest.

The frosting on our joyful Friday reunion was Salim’s returning a book I had loaned him a quarter century ago! Needless to say, that event alone made our trip from Washington well worthwhile.

I thought Salim’s contemporary colleagues might wish to know something more about the gem in their midst.

**John Cool** worked in the Asia and Pacific program.

WHAT A WONDERFUL PARTY that was at the Foundation. It was a thrill for me to see and talk with some of the oldtimers. I also enjoyed talking with Luis Ubiñas, who I have been eager to meet, and then to have him call Mary Bundy and me up to

the podium was a happy surprise. It was so gracious of him.

Visiting the building brought back myriad memories. Fred loved that place.

*Ruth Friendly, widow of Fred Friendly*

WHAT A GREAT REUNION. My only suggestion would be the possibility of having a

hand microphone if the identification of members becomes a tradition. It was so interesting, but sometimes a little hard to hear.

*Mary Bundy, widow of McGeorge Bundy*

I came out of duty and stayed for the sheer pleasure.

I noticed that there were relatively few support and administrative staff there. The program, especially the breakouts, were very skewed toward program, with the *continued on page 12*

## Adventures of Reunions Past

**by Richard Magat**

Although the November 20 reunion was a wonderful event, it lacked some of the exotism of earlier gatherings.

There was the reunion held at the historic National Arts Club on Gramercy Park, for example. LAFF members and their guests arrived to confront a picket line of Puerto Rican activists protesting cuts in social services by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. The mayor, as it turns out, was a sponsor of another event being held at the club, a fund-raiser for the mayor of Jersey City. Although we outnumbered the Jersey City contingent, any thought of physical combat was dispelled by the heft of the Jersey Cityites. In any event, the club arranged to move us to another space in the building.

Although we were ready to have the next reunion at the National Arts Club, in 2003, the club was not available. It seems that some of

its officials were embroiled in legal matters involving misuse of funds. Further, the club was feuding with its neighbors about the fate of trees in the park.

After a search for alternative sites, conducted mainly by **Pat Corrigan**, the cavernous Seventh Regiment Armory, at Lexington Avenue and 67th Street, was identified because, we learned, it rented its top floor to nonprofit organizations. Another floor, it turned out, housed a shelter for the homeless.

Riding to inspect the premises, Pat and I shared an elevator with two women residents of the shelter. As the creaking elevator rose, one of them said to the other, “When the hell are they going to fix this f\_\_\_\_\_ elevator,” whereupon her friend admonished, “Mary, watch your language, there are two gentlemen in the elevator.”

**Richard Magat** co-founded the LAFF Society.





Luis Ubiñas, president of the Ford Foundation, speaking to the alumni in the auditorium at the opening session.

## REPORTING THE PANEL DISCUSSIONS

### NATURAL ASSETS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

by Peter de Janosi

The session on Natural Assets dealt primarily with a New Global Initiative on Climate Change of the Foundation. It centered on a presentation by Peter Riggs, a Foundation program officer for natural resources and sustainable development, and was enriched by comments of four fellow panelists.

Riggs explained that “climate change” is only the framing topic, with forestry, land rights, environmental justice and pro-poor policies, and insuring the rights of indigenous people the more immediate topics of concern. Forests and deforestation are critically important because they are related to sequestering carbon emissions, the major cause of climate change. The Foundation’s work on these issues is carried out in collaboration with other funding agencies, notably the Packard and Moore foundations.

The various well-known United Nations initiatives on climate change tend to be focused on “top down” policies, with local groups getting little or no attention. In contrast, the Ford Foundation and its partners are concerned with local groups, how they would be impacted by, and can affect, the policies. This laudable concern is challeng-

ing to implement and fraught with complexity. The Foundation learned this well when working on community development in the United States. Doing so in a global setting is much more difficult.

Several of the panelists called attention to this. For example, Roy Offenheiser, president of OXFAM America and moderator of the session, emphasized that we need to give attention to the ways that localities and the state relate to each other, and possibly create institutions that mediate between them. Christine Pendzich, an independent consultant, spoke about the fact that communities often can cause problems by not always understanding how to behave responsibly from a sustainability perspective. Extension programs and financial instruments may have to be created, she said. All the panelists agreed that the Foundation’s emphasis on local, usually poor, communities makes sense, however difficult doing so might be.

Unfortunately, we didn’t have time for detailed discussions from the audience. My impression, though, is that the subject of climate change is now very much on the agenda of scientists and policy makers, and the field is crowded (some may say overcrowded) with NGOs. However, it was good to see that the Ford Foundation decided to be a “player,” and that it is doing so in partnership with other funders. Also, it

makes good sense that the Foundation, despite working under an excessively broad heading, is focused on specific issues.

Whether the concentrated attention on local communities on a global scale will be productive and cost-effective is an open question, however. Be that as it may, the emphasis on the poor and disadvantaged fits well into the Foundation’s agenda, and it is certainly worth trying.

*Peter de Janosi, an economist, spent eighteen years at the Foundation in various capacities, including as program officer in charge of Higher Education and Research. He has been Vice President of the Russell Sage Foundation and Director of the International Institute for Applied System Analysis in Austria.*

### PURSUING HUMAN RIGHTS

Sara Rios, director of the Human Rights program at the Foundation, provided an overview of the restructuring of the program, which now is part of Democracy, Rights and Justice. The program has two directors and seven lines of work. Rios oversees five initiatives related to equality and justice. Martin Abregú is the interim director of two initiatives that focus primarily on the Foundation’s global human rights works.

Program officers in nine field offices work on one or more of the human rights initiatives.

Rios noted that the Foundation’s increased emphasis on evaluation creates the challenge of finding an effective way to measure the impact of human rights work, which often is difficult to assess. One human rights grantmaker at another foundation agreed that evaluation can seem daunting, but she suggested finding “small chunks” of work that show what success looks like.

The same grantmaker called attention to the key role Ford played in creating a strong immigrant rights movement by bringing other funders to the field and encouraging collaboration. Today, grantee groups are more likely to work together and the field has adopted more sophisticated communications tools and strategies.

Rios agreed that immigrant rights funders are very organized and can move the agenda, but wondered if this is always a good thing. It’s worth reflecting on the role foundations play in shaping the work of grantees in a specific field, she said.

During the discussion period, most participants were heartened by the Foundation’s



commitment to human rights, but questions were raised about the implications of recent changes in the program's structure.

In recent years, for example, the Foundation has supported efforts to apply a human rights lens to social, cultural, economic and civil rights issues in the United States. Some wondered if changes in the program, specifically the split between United States and overseas human rights work, will weaken that focus. Hope was expressed that the Foundation will continue to promote human rights as a U.S., not just a global, issue.

In response to questions about whether the Foundation is funding efforts to educate Americans about human rights, Rios noted that all its initiatives have a strong communications component.

### **Ford's...approach to transforming secondary education engages all constituencies: business, local government, NGOs, philanthropies, parents, community groups, district leaders and teachers.**

One participant wondered what happened to the focus on "peace," as in the former Peace and Social Justice program. Another expressed regret that Ford no longer worked on worldwide conflict resolution.

One participant, who heads a major human rights organization, noted that this is an exciting time for the field. The old model of human rights work—documenting abuses and denouncing governments—has expanded to include a focus on solutions that can prevent these abuses.

It was suggested, only half jokingly, that, to sharpen a foundation's work, program officers should take two years off and become heads of NGOs so they can experience what it's like to seek funding.

*This article is based on the notes of several participants.*

## **CONTINUITY AND CHANGE**

**by Ruth Mayleas**

Speaking about the Foundation's new initiatives in Educational Opportunity and Scholarship, a constituent part of Ford's program in Education, Creativity and Free Expression, Alison Bernstein, a Foundation vice president, said she was worried that the session was not as "sexy" as human rights or sexuality and reproductive health.

But "who knew," she said, "that *The Wall Street Journal* would make our rather innocuous, straightforward announcement of a seven-year, \$100 million initiative in transforming secondary education so controversial?"

Bernstein is a historian, and as such sees more continuity than change in the new educational and scholarship efforts, which concentrate on improving life chances through education of the poor and marginalized, concern about pathways to higher education for these students, and a continuing focus on urban as opposed to suburban or rural areas.

Changes from past programming, she noted, include more attention to secondary education, a greater focus on urban and old

K-12, and nothing on primary education, early education, arts education or a specific curriculum. Higher education initiatives are a "work in progress," she said, with much legacy to evaluate and learn from, including IFP fellowships, diversity fellowships, community college work, affirmative action, and partnerships with other donors.

The news on secondary education is, again, a combination of continuity and change. Ford's approach remains multifaceted, based on such lessons from the past as the need for fiscal equity, effective teachers and teaching environments and greater accountability. There is, however, a new concern that there may be a need for more time for learning on both a daily and yearly basis. This approach to transforming secondary education engages all constituencies: business, local government, NGOs, philanthropies, parents, community groups, district leaders and teachers.

The Foundation's higher education initiatives, she said, are designed to build knowledge for social justice, which involves maintaining diversity fellowships



## **'A HAPPY SURPRISE'**

Luis Ubiñas, president of the Foundation, paused before speaking to the crowd gathered in the auditorium and asked Mary Bundy, widow of McGeorge Bundy, and Ruth Friendly, widow of Fred Friendly, to join him on the stage.

"There are so many people responsible for the immense history of this Foundation, for the greatness of this institution," he said. "All too often the spouses of those people are ignored."

As the women stood beside him, Ubiñas paid homage to the legacy at Ford by noting that their "husbands played such a central part in the history of this Foundation."

"I know personally," he said, "the sacrifices these two women and several others in the audience made to support their spouses, and I just want to take a moment to acknowledge that sacrifice and to praise that sacrifice." Ruth Friendly said she had been "eager to meet" Ubiñas, "and then to have him call Mary Bundy and me up to the podium was a happy surprise. It was so gracious of him."

## Panel Discussions

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to continue to produce scholars and academics who will promote diverse perspectives and experiences in classrooms. However, she noted, there will be no special curriculum or scholarship efforts in such areas as women's, Afro-American, ethnic, Latino or American-Indian studies.

Bernstein noted that when program representatives abroad were asked to prioritize their needs, only one, China, showed an interest in secondary education. Generally, she said, the reps chose higher education, due in part to the Ford legacy but also because, in developing nations, universities are where leaders come from.

Concern was expressed in the brief question period about the role of technology. Bernstein responded that the Foundation's media program would be brought into the overall discussion, but that hasn't happened yet. "Eventually," she said, "media and education will talk more."

**Ruth Mayleas** directed the Foundation's arts programs in the 1980s and early 1990s, and has worked with major national and international arts funding and service agencies.

## RE-IMAGINING HOW FORD COMMUNICATES

by Michael Seltzer

Change does not come readily to large institutions, and the Ford Foundation is no exception. It was, therefore, remarkable to learn of the Foundation's recent bold efforts to re-imagine how it communicates with its external audiences.

Marta Tellado, the Foundation's vice president for communications, recounted extensive efforts over a four-year period culling information from various internal (147 staff) and external stakeholders, including policymakers, key opinion leaders and prospective grantees, on its past communications efforts.

The findings were sobering:

- The Foundation was seen as opaque and inaccessible;
- Its work was not seen as cutting-edge or relevant, and programmatically diffuse;
- Key audiences had difficulty understanding the focus of different programs and how they reflected the Foundation as a whole;
- The Foundation appeared as a relic of "old industrial-era philanthropy";

- There was an unwavering appetite for more information about its impact and the results of its work;
- Past communications efforts were robust but scattered, and, most important, audiences were having difficulty understanding the Foundation's various programs and its grantmaking process.

After analyzing these results, from one staff and three audience surveys, it became rapidly clear that it was paramount that the Foundation create its own "brandscape" to differentiate itself in the increasingly

- A new look and content for the annual report;
- A unified global look and feel to all the Foundation's communications vehicles;
- Launch of a new, more user-friendly web site in January, which will include bios of program officers;
- Adoption of a new slogan, "working with visionaries on the frontlines of social change worldwide";
- Identification of a prime audience of social-change makers;
- A more evident expression of personality

**"It's great to hear that the Foundation is taking the long-term view. There is a long history of the Foundation building a field by strengthening civil society movements and moving issues from marginal status to front and center."**

*Joan Kaufman, a lecturer at the Heller Graduate School of Brandeis University and at the Harvard Medical School*

crowded field of organized philanthropy. In other words, the Foundation had to move boldly to assert its personality.

To be strong, the new persona had to be aspirational and functional, and trigger emotional connections. The timing was right, as the Foundation had finished refocusing its grantmaking strategies.

Key questions included:

- Are we communicating clearly our mission and core values?
- How can we most effectively reintroduce the Foundation in an era where greater transparency is *de rigueur*?
- Are our self-perceptions consistent with how others view us?
- What language can we employ to illuminate our work to a diverse global public?
- How can we most effectively be consistent, transparent and distinctive in telling our story?

After a careful analysis of all this rich data, Marta set out to create a unified look and feel to all the Foundation's communications vehicles, including its annual reports, business cards, web site, logo and tagline. The aim was to ensure consistency, transparency and distinctiveness. A sampling of employee business cards over the years illustrated vividly how in the past the Foundation had used an extensive and confusing array of logos, graphics and fonts.

The changes that will continue to unfold in the years ahead include:

attributes, such as boldness, resolution and social change, and

- Communication of the ethos of hope through telling stories of key social-change visionaries supported by the Foundation in concrete and compelling language, and its deep belief in the inherent dignity of all people.

Through these various strategies, the Foundation endeavors to transform people's daily experiences with the Foundation and its staff across the globe. It is a tall order, but a compelling blueprint for how the Ford Foundation can advance its impact and enhance its reputation in the decades ahead.

**Michael Seltzer**, a philanthropic advisor and strategist, worked in the Foundation's Governance and Civil Society program.

## A FOCUS ON IMPACT

by Bonnie Shepard

Margaret Hempel, director of the Foundation's Sexuality and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRH) program, observed at the outset that, following a foundation-wide strategic planning effort, a need was identified for "a much stronger focus on impact."

"Impact can have a twenty- to thirty-year horizon," she said, "but how do you know you are making progress towards that? The biggest shift is that the 1990s and early 2000s were about field building. Now,



Shep Forman on his way to the podium to take over officially as president of the Society, succeeding Peter Geithner, who introduced him.



Aumni introduced themselves during the opening session of the reunion, drawing rapt attention from others.

within a given field, when asked, what are the gaps? Where is it best to focus?"

The strategic planning process identified three "challenges."

- First, she said, "with limited resources, what are the most important venues to address SRH issues right now?"
- Second, "What would bring the most progress right now? What are the big threats or opportunities?"
- Third, how to integrate work on HIV and reproductive health and rights. She asked, "What can our grantees do to bring these groups closer together?"

Joan Kaufman, a lecturer at the Heller Graduate School of Brandeis University and at the Harvard Medical School, said it was "great to hear that the Foundation is taking the long-term view. There is a long history

of the Foundation building a field by strengthening civil society movements and moving issues from marginal status to front and center."

"The big challenge," she said, "is to figure out what to measure along that path. Evaluation needs to take complex social and political processes into account. Identifying the long-term metrics is a critical challenge."

Much of the discussion dealt with the relationship between HIV and reproductive health and rights (RHR), and the need, Kaufman said, to "look at vulnerabilities driving the epidemic. The largest group affected is 15- to 24-year-old women," in large measure, she said, "because of their lack of rights, their inability to control choices."

One obstacle to integration of RHR with HIV, she said, is that "HIV has become so

medicalized. Earlier, important conversations on HIV prevention and women's rights showed a better understanding of vulnerability...Now it has all become about treatment and saving lives."

Adrienne Germain, president of the International Women's Health Coalition, emphasized the connection. "RH is so related to HIV," she said. "In most cases, they both come from the same activity, which is sex. Girls and women cannot make autonomous decisions about having a child or HIV prevention if core issues related to human rights—such as sexual coercion or violence or women's inequality—are not addressed...It is imperative that we pay attention to issues that make girls more vulnerable, such as discrimination in education and empowerment and violence."

She, too, was encouraged that the Foundation "has long-term goals. Our progress in the HIV/AIDS arena with large agencies, such as The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, is very slow. We can give you interim indicators but not impact."

Opportunities for increased attention to these issues exist in several venues. First, some people in the World Bank are becoming more aware of reproductive health needs. "The Bank is an important actor because the highest fertility countries are also the poorest countries." Also "the commitment to these issues of the new head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Helen Clark...UNDP is the umbrella agency at the country level."

Finally, Germain pointed out the significant opportunities in advocacy with the United States foreign assistance establishment. The President's global health initiative is bringing maternal-child health, family planning and HIV together to stop the vertical silos, with a commitment of \$63 billion over ten years. This initiative will help to break down the pattern of skewed funding in other global agencies.

"A lot of us are pointing out that reproductive health is the most achievable goal, but the least likely to be achieved," Germain said. "It is purely a question of political will. Investment in building advocacy capacity at the country and global level is so important for Ford."

*Bonnie Shepard served as program officer in charge of the Sexual and Reproductive Health program at the Foundation, and now is the Senior Planning and Evaluation Specialist for Social Sectors Development Strategies, in Boston.*

## A Flow of Memories

*continued from page 7*

exception of the logo session. Perhaps during this period next time around there could be a lounge for those who would like to catch up and hang out, something geared toward networking skills or something else. It would be great to make LAFF more inclusive in that way.

**Alan Divack** worked in *Information Services and Program Management*.

IT WAS A WONDERFUL gathering, long overdue. Such potential for the future, for current Ford Foundation staff and alumni alike. My only suggestion would be to include more program staff next time, including during the informal part. Interaction among alumni is a high priority for everyone, but getting to know the current staff, and vice versa, is important as well.

**Jane Donaldson** worked in *Human Resources* and now is a partner at *Phillips Oppenheim*.

IT WAS A GREAT PLEASURE for me to see so many of my former colleagues, most of us

older and frailer, but, as our much loved Doc Howe used to say, "still creeping around."

In addition to pleasure, I also felt gratitude to the Foundation's new president that he decided the alumni are a potential asset to the organization, and that he thought it wise to make peace with those who were so insensitively, may I say brutally, treated by his predecessors. Not being one of those on the receiving end of that treatment, I can only hope that those who were will accept the new happy realities.

**Peter de Janosi** worked in *three programs, Economic Development and Administration, Higher Education and Research, and Resources and the Environment*.

WHILE IT WAS A VERY fine reunion, I did feel a bit uncomfortable with being at the Ford Foundation. Why? Not sure, but I think there was a bit too much promotion, probably natural enough, but I guess I want to see the agenda set by LAFF as opposed to the Foundation. But this may just be quixotic on my part.

**Hank Saltzman** worked in *Public Affairs*, and now is president of *Saltzman Associates, International*.

## FINANCIAL REPORT 2009

### CY 2008

**Balance on 12/31/08** **\$5,216.61**

### CY 2009

#### INCOME

Dues, donations, reunion fees, interest \$10,446.76

#### EXPENSES

Newsletters \$2,282.50

Secretarial services & Supplies (DN) \$1,067.39

Supplies & PO Box (NT) \$366.24

Reunion reception \$2,958.12

Miscellaneous \$176.33

Bank fees \$35.40

Sub-total \$6,885.98

Income/expenses \$3,560.78

**Balance on 12/31/09** **\$8,777.39**

**Nellie Toma**

*Secretary/Treasurer*

## The LAFF Society

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